



**Department of  
Education**

*Joel I. Klein, Chancellor*

**Quality Review Report  
Office of Accountability  
2008-2009**

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The Ella Baker School**

**Elementary/Middle School 225**

**317 East 67<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10065**

**Principal: Laura Garcia**

**Dates of review: December 10 – 11, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Ella Baker School is an elementary/middle school with 298 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 39% Black, 44% Hispanic, 11% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.3%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is well developed.**

The Ella Baker School has made great progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report. The principal has incrementally created a reflective community of learners who constantly monitor student outcomes and make revision to their instructional practices as needed to ensure that students meet or exceed their learning goals. The school makes the most of its small size by creating an intimate learning environment which allows teachers to bond and understand their students' learning needs. There is a strong culture of mutual trust and respect between students and teachers that creates a positive learning environment where teachers and students feel well supported and are not afraid to take risks. The school has a strong culture of inquiry-based learning where students make connections between core subjects to reinforce their learning.

The school has established a highly effective data management system that covers all core subjects. The Primary Learning Record has become a centralized assessment system where formative and summative data information is stored. Teachers access the system to evaluate the curriculum, track students' progress, set individual learning goals, and develop differentiated strategies to improve student outcomes. The data assessment system has evolved to become a sophisticated and helpful tool for teachers to analyze and interpret formative and summative data. Teachers reflect on the data gathered and plan individual learning goals for students. However, there is potential to further develop teachers' ability to identify individual learning goals jointly with their students that include interim benchmarks that will enable teachers, parents and students to monitor and evaluate students' progress even more effectively in all core subjects. Teachers also recognize the need to enhance their craft in providing constructive feedback to students on how to attain next learning steps.

Professional collaboration between teachers and school leaders is well structured. The Teaching and Learning Committee meets twice a week to assess instructional practice and plan differentiated professional activities that contribute towards strengthening teachers' pedagogy. School leaders provide teachers with the opportunity to meet weekly to assess practice and make revision to the curriculum as needed to plan differentiated instruction that meets the needs of all students. Teachers schedule inter-class visitations to provide each other with constructive feedback. Their in-depth knowledge of data enables them to plan lessons that are differentiated to challenge and engage all students in learning. They research each unit of study by focusing on the 'Big Idea' and strategically plan activities that spark students' interest. However, the school does not use technology in classrooms to reinforce teaching and learning and further challenge students' interest.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has created a reflective community of learners which is monitoring and revising plans throughout the year to ensure students' have high expectations and meet or exceed their learning goals.
- The school's highly effective system for analyzing and interpreting formative and summative data enables staff to track students' progress precisely and ensures that students' performance improves incrementally.
- The strong culture of trust and respect among teachers and students fosters a positive environment for learning that is highly effective in promoting students' achievement.
- Structured professional collaboration during weekly cohort meetings allows teachers to assess students' needs, tailor curriculum and plan differentiated lessons to improve student learning outcomes.
- Good communication with families about what is expected of students in core subjects has resulted in increased family involvement in their child's learning which has made a significant impact on student achievement.
- A multi-tiered professional development plan provides teachers with effective strategies for engaging students in learning and differentiating instruction to improve student learning outcomes.
- The school's rich and broad curriculum includes interdisciplinary links which enable students to actively engage in project-based, hands on learning and make connections between subjects to reinforce their learning.

### What the school needs to improve

- Involve students in setting and achieving their own goals by giving them constructive feedback on how to attain their next learning steps.
- Further develop the effectiveness of goal setting for individual students by providing interim benchmarks to enable teachers and families to track student progress even more effectively.
- Develop the use of technology across core subjects to expand the range of approaches to teaching and learning.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school has made great strides since the last review in further developing a data management system that is simple to use but extremely effective, to track students' progress and identify the needs of all subgroups. The Primary Learning Record assessment tool has become the hub the teachers use to store formative and summative data, document student goals and track student progress in all core subjects. The information enables them to identify the performance and needs of English language learners and students from different ethnic groups within their class and grade. Teachers meet weekly to analyze and interpret formative and summative data to gain a deeper understanding of students' individual needs. Teachers formally assess students three times a year in all core subjects, enter the assessments onto the Primary Learning Record and use the information to create students' goals. Teachers are constantly assessing students' progress informally as well via running records, conferencing, unit tests, attendance, projects and student work to make sure students are on track to meet their individual goals. This detailed process gives the school a comprehensive picture of students' progress and has contributed to an increase in student performance on standardized tests.

Parents are extremely pleased, as reported by one parent, "Teachers know what level my child is at." At the end of each formal assessment period, teachers prepare a narrative report which is shared with families at conferences keeping them aware of their child's growth and areas that need development. Attendance data is reviewed weekly by the school leaders and the Pupil Personnel Team and parents are immediately informed of absence or lateness. Weekly letters are sent home informing parents of activities being conducted in class and making parents aware of how they can help at home to enhance their child's learning. The school leaders and faculty are constantly reviewing formative and summative data to revise curriculum and to meet the needs of their students.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Professional collaboration between teachers and school leaders is well structured. The Teaching and Learning Committee meets twice a week to assess instructional practice. Members of the committee facilitate weekly grade-level cohort meetings where teachers have an opportunity to share best practices, review curriculum, plan differentiated strategies and set goals for their students. Teachers reflect on the data gathered in their

centralized system to plan individual learning goals for students in all core subjects. Formal revisions to students' goals are conducted three times a year when students also reflect on whether or not they have accomplished these goals. Teachers generate a narrative report about students' strengths and areas for improvement and share the report with students and families, keeping them informed of growth. However, teachers do not currently provide ongoing constructive feedback to students on next learning steps or involve them in setting their own goals to promote motivation and greater ownership of their own learning. The school recognizes the need for teachers and students to work together to jointly create individual student learning goals that include interim benchmarks to enable students and families to track progress and assume a greater sense of ownership in student learning.

School leaders and faculty provide constant opportunities for families and students to come together and understand the school's expectations. The school leadership team meets to discuss and develop the Comprehensive Educational Plan. All stakeholders understand the meaning of being a reflective community of learners that works with the whole child and provides the guidance necessary for students to meet their future goals.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

School leaders and faculty have developed a highly effective system that enables students to apply skills learned in all core subjects during a specially programmed period called 'work time'. This allows students to make connections that reinforce learning across all core subjects. School leaders provide teachers with the opportunity to meet weekly to assess and make revisions to the curriculum as needed and to plan differentiated lessons that actively challenge and engaged students' in purposeful work. All curricula are standards-based and have been modified to include interdisciplinary connections across content areas. As a result, teachers have improved their craft by developing cross curricular strategies that support and accelerate students' learning. Teachers' in-depth knowledge of data enables them to plan lessons that will challenge and engage students in learning by providing purposeful work that captures their interest and inquiry. By first researching the units of study and looking at the 'Big Idea' of the unit, they are then able to strategically plan lessons that provide students with differentiated activities that stimulate their learning. However, teachers do not use technology in classrooms as a tool to reinforce teaching and learning across core subjects to further stimulate students' interest.

There is a strong culture of trust and respect in the school. Teachers are not afraid to take risks because they feel supported by the school leaders. The school mantra, which underpins the school's work, is "to know the whole child before we can teach them." As a result, school leaders have developed a supportive, child-centered environment and a positive school climate where children learn best by being actively engaged in relevant and purposeful work. Teachers invest a great deal of their time nurturing their students, as one teacher reported, "We live our students." Students also have reciprocal feelings for their teachers, as exemplified by one student who reported, "My teacher is caring, understanding and respects me for who I am." Students enjoy being at school at all times. They are treated with respect and as one student reported, "Our voices are heard." Students at Ella Baker School are empowered to become democratic citizens because they know that their opinions count. The school does a great job instilling

confidence and high self esteem in students as well as academic skills needed for students' future success.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

There is a strong culture of professional collaboration in the school which enables teachers to work on improving their instruction in an atmosphere of support and trust. Highly effective observations, both formal and informal, enable school leaders and mentors to determine individual needs precisely and to provide each individual with targeted professional development activities to enhance their instructional practice. School leaders and teachers collaboratively set individual goals for teachers and determine what strategies can be implemented to attain goals to improve their pedagogy. This tiered professional development plan provides teachers with constructive feedback on strategies designed to engage students in learning and differentiated approaches to improve student outcomes. Teachers meet weekly to share best practices. These structured professional collaborations between staff provide commonality in teaching approaches, without impeding teachers' creativity. Teachers meet weekly to discuss students' needs; tailor curriculum and plan differentiated lessons to improve student outcomes. Teachers also schedule inter-class visitations to provide each other with constructive feedback to enhance their craft. School leaders have created a structure that allows for all core subjects teachers and support providers to become reflective practitioners for honing their craft to improve students' learning. Teachers are provided with many opportunities for additional professional development to further enrich instructional practices.

The inquiry team analyzed the Primary Learning Record and Primary Learning Continuum, and then targeted twenty students in grades kindergarten through third who had problems with vocabulary development and comprehension. The team collaborates well and has chosen the strategy on reciprocal teaching for the target group. This strategy has made such an impact on targeted students that it is being replicated in cohort inquiry groups throughout the school to improve student learning.

The school has a strong partnership with outside organizations that enriches the school's curricula in providing social, academic, and visual and performing arts for students. School leaders and guidance personnel meet weekly to review and analyze data on the effectiveness of support services in accelerating students' academic and personal growth. They use this information to make timely and relevant revisions to improve student outcomes.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school does a very good job providing differentiated learning activities that contribute to the academic, professional and personal growth of students and teachers. Teachers are regularly assessing students daily and periodically to gain a greater insight

into student needs and strengths and make adjustments to their instructional practices. As a result, teachers adopt strategies that have maximum impact on student performance. The Primary Learning Record assessment system has been a key tool in enabling teachers to access all sources of data. It is used to assess the curriculum, track student goals and develop differentiated strategies to improve student outcomes. It also provides the school with interim checkpoints to assess plans and make revisions throughout the year. Discovery learning is prevalent in the school's culture where everyone is constantly assessing students' progress, identifying shortfalls and making revisions when needed to improve student outcomes. Plans are constantly discussed and internalized by all stakeholders. Teachers are always seeking to understand their students holistically and provide them with skills needed for future success. This is exemplified in the school self-evaluation form which was completed collaboratively and accurately evaluates all quality statements. By reflecting on instructional practices it gives an honest picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Through this process the teachers were able to identify skills that students needed to improve and target these skills with concentrated instruction, leading to increased student understanding and higher test scores.

The principal's clear vision, shared by all stakeholders, is to develop a reflective community of learners. This underpins the school's work and has resulted in a culture of inquiry learning which challenges students to ask open-ended, thought provoking questions. Teachers are constantly seeking development opportunities to further hone their skills of assessment, curriculum development and planning in their content area to improve their pedagogy. The school's philosophy, "Know the child well in order to teach them," is the guiding force for the purposeful work that teachers and school leaders engage in to improve students' learning experience.

## School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Ella Baker School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?				<b>X</b>
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?				<b>X</b>
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?				<b>X</b>
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

### DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X			
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?				X			
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?				X			
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?				X			
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>